

Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

New salamander discovered in North Georgia

Greetings and welcome to the Southern Appalachian Creature Feature.

The Southern Appalachians is a region known for its salamander diversity, the most famous of which is probably the hellbender, North America's largest salamander, occasionally reaching lengths greater than 30 inches. However, it's a very small salamander that has been getting some recent attention.

The patch-nosed salamander, the second smallest in the U.S., was recently discovered in North Georgia. It was first spotted by Bill Peterman, a University of Missouri graduate student visiting a stream near Toccoa, Georgia with a team of researchers from the University of Georgia in 2007.

Peterman and the other biologists had never seen anything like it. After consulting with other scientists and comparing the animals' DNA to other salamanders, it became apparent they had discovered not only a new species of salamander, but one so distinct it warranted its own genus, the first new genus for an amphibian in nearly 50 years. The findings were recently published in the Journal of Zoology.

The tiny salamander is about an inch long and orangish-brown in color with a light spot on its nose, giving it its common name. It has the scientific name *Urspelerpes brucei*, in honor of Richard Bruce, a professor emeritus at Western Carolina University who has been heavily involved in salamander research.

Since the initial discovery, the salamander has been found in two additional North Georgia streams and a nearby stream in South Carolina.

For WNCW and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, this is Gary Peeples.